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Fort Worth firm faces layoffs after cutbacks

FORT WORTH (AP) — Massive layoffs within the troubled tilt-rotor aircraft program of Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. may come as early as Monday unless more federal money is forthcoming, according to a published report.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram, quoting sources who spoke on conditions of anonymity, said Bell is now caught in a financing squeeze. The company earlier warned up to 2,000 workers on the V-22 Osprey project could lose their jobs.

Sources told the newspaper the first cuts could begin as early as Monday. The sources estimated as many as 2,000 Bell employees could lose their jobs over the following 60 days.

United Auto Workers Local 218's president said he understood financing was the major problem but that he was not informed of the decision to begin layoffs.

"Evidently, the (federal) funding is very interim so they're going to have to decide on somebody to foot the bill," J.J. Birchard, the local's president, said.

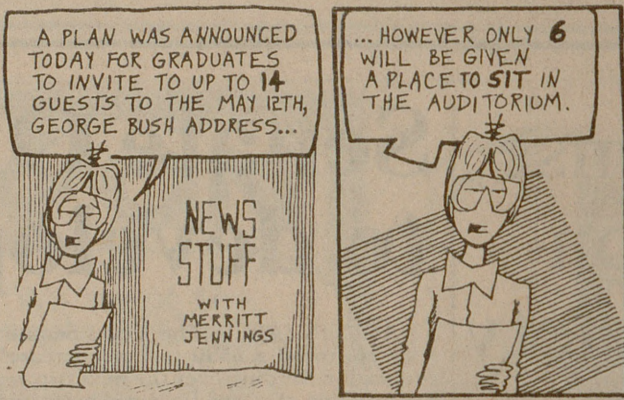
Late Monday, Bell officials posted letters at company facilities in Fort Worth, warning of the possible layoffs. The letters were similar to those mailed last week to Bell workers in anticipation of Defense Secretary Dick Cheney's decision to cancel the \$40 billion Navy tilt-rotor program.

The secretary announced April 25 in Washington that all funds for the Osprey project would be cut from the federal defense budget in the 1990 fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

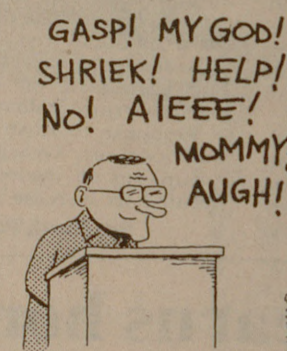
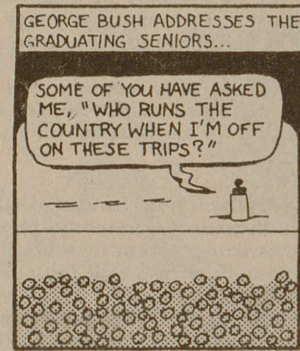
Congressional supporters vowed to restore funding for the program. Navy officials apparently decided to let the project continue with money from the 1989 fiscal-year budget until it becomes clearer whether it survives in Congress.

Currently, Bell and Boeing Helicopter Co. are developing the V-22 under a \$1.8 billion Navy contract.

Warped



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by Don Atkinson

Union, American reach new contract agreement

DALLAS (AP) — American Airlines and the Transport Workers Union reached agreement in principle Tuesday on a contract for the company's 23,000 ground service workers after 2½ weeks of mediation.

Details of the contract were not released pending agreement on final language and a vote by the membership.

A company news release said the agreement was reached after 27 hours of continuous bargaining. The release said American Vice President Charles Pasciuto and TWU international vice president John Kerrigan "said the agreement benefits both the company and the union and will enable American to continue the growth plan that has made the airline an industry leader."

The mediation was requested after union members turned down American's \$610 million offer 12,143-to-5,140.

The offer included raises of as much as 99 percent for some workers, but union leaders had objected to a two-tier wage scale under which it takes new hires as long as 12 years to reach top pay. The union had sought to reduce that to

about five years. The union also objected to provisions which would have employees contribute to the company health plan for the first time.

Airline officials complained that the contract was a victim of union politics because several locals were in the midst of election campaigns and candidates used the contract as an issue.

Ed Koziatek, the union's international vice president for American, just last week had expressed doubts that the mediation would lead to a contract.

The four-year pact became amendable on March 1. Under federal law, airline contracts do not expire. If the two sides cannot reach agreement, a mediator is called in to spark negotiations; if the mediator declares an impasse in the talks, there is then a 30-day cooling off period.

A strike can be called only after that period expires.

The TWU represents about 23,000 of American's 67,000 employees. Its members include the airline's mechanics, bag handlers, ground crews, stock clerks, guards, meteorologists and aircraft cleaners.

Also Tuesday, American's parent company AMR Corp., confirmed it is on the verge of ordering about 100 new commuter aircraft in "several hundred million dollar" deal.


The aircraft, seating between 30 and 40 people, will be used for the company's AMR Eagle Inc. subsidiary that feeds some of its major hubs.

Published reports have said the company is leaning toward Swedish manufacturer Saab, although others mentioned as possible suppliers include Boeing Canada-DeHavilland Division based near Toronto, and ATR, a joint French-Italian company.

Fort Worth-based American is coming off its most profitable year ever, during which it became the nation's largest carrier. AMR posted 1988 net income of \$476.8 million, a 140.3 percent increase from 1987 and 37.9 percent higher than the previous record of \$345.8 million in 1985.

The company also reported first quarter profits of \$101 million, a 47.7 percent jump from 1988's first three months.

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